

The Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired VABVI Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2024 (July 2023 - June 2024)



Letter from the Executive Director

In Fiscal Year 2024, the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI) saw successes across the board. Programs such as SMART, PALS, and IRLE flourished, while we also continued initiatives such as the New Americans Outreach Project. VABVI participated in many events around the state and beyond. Our signature fundraising event, Dancing with the Burlington Stars, returned to the Flynn for another fabulous show. The Second Century campaign, which commemorates 100 years of VABVI's good work, has been steadily on its way to reaching its goal. 2024 was a wonderful year for VABVI and all its programs. Thank you, as always, for your support!



Steve Pouliot
Executive Director



Our Mission

The Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI) was founded in 1926 to enable Vermonters who are blind or visually impaired to be more independent, cultivate adaptive skills, and improve their quality of life.

What is VABVI?

VABVI has provided clients with life-changing services for nearly a century.

While we are best known for our direct services, our organization also connects clients to a larger network of resources and additional support. We are proud to both provide services and act as a gateway for our clients as they become more independent, cultivate adaptive skills, and improve their quality of life.

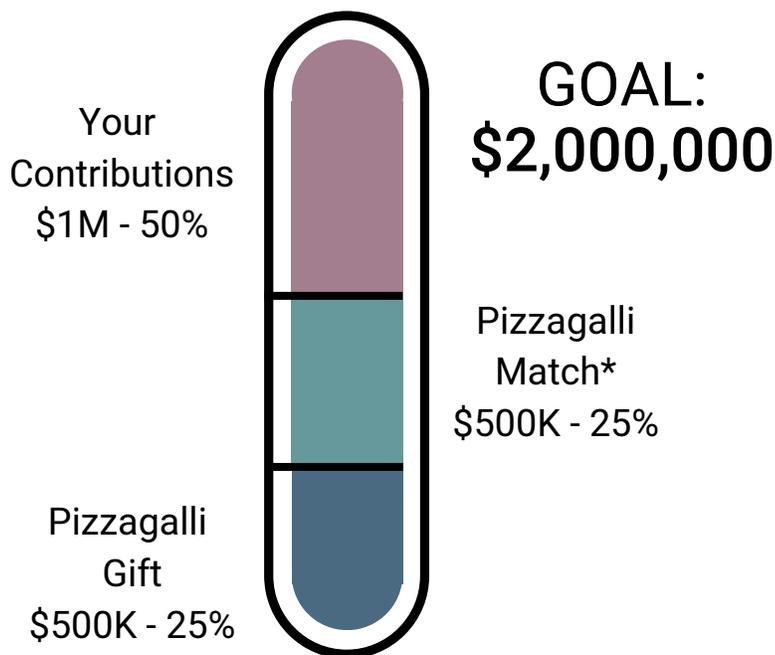
VABVI Services

- Orientation and Mobility
- Volunteer Transportation
- Adaptive Equipment and Technology
- Peer Assisted Learning and Support (PALS)
- Low Vision Services and Vision Rehab
- SMART (Speech, Magnification, Access, Reading, and Telecommunications) Device Training
- Infant and Toddler Family Service Planning
- IRLE (Intensive Residential Life Experiences) Program
- HAPI (Helping Adolescents Prepare for Independence) Program
- Partners with LEAP (Learn, Earn, Prosper) Program
- Special Education
- Provides professional support to Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) clients
- Refers clients to the ABLE Library for large print, electronic, braille, and audio books

Second Century Campaign

VABVI launched its Second Century Campaign in August 2023 to raise \$2 million to ensure long-term, sustainable funding for our SMART Device Training Program. SMART (Speech/ Magnification/ Access/ Reading/ Telecommunications) Device Training assists our clients with using technology to stay connected and thriving. Our goal is to raise or secure pledges for a total of \$2 million by Summer 2024.

Thanks to a generous \$500K donation from the Pizzagalli Family Foundation [PFF], longtime friend of VABVI and the SMART Device Training Program, we are already one-quarter of the way to permanent funding for SMART. Additionally, the PFF has offered a matching gift opportunity. For every \$2 raised by VABVI for the campaign, the PFF will contribute \$1, with additional funds up to \$500K.



As of January 2025, the Second Century Campaign has raised a total of \$1,037,279. Thank you to all donors for supporting our important services! The Second Century Fund's goal is within our reach, and every contribution brings us closer to permanent funding for SMART. Please consider supporting our services today!

* Maximum Possible Gift

Adult Services

The Ambassador Program was launched. This program aims to help connect seniors with vision loss with other Vermont seniors experiencing vision loss. Too often people experience vision loss and feel alone or misunderstood. The Ambassador Program connects Vermonters who have experienced adjustment to vision loss with those newly diagnosed. The experienced Ambassador can be a listening ear and share their own experiences with the person newly exposed to vision loss. Both participants express great benefit from being able to talk to another person going through a similar experience. This personal one-to-one connection helps those who live rurally and may be the only person in their circle of acquaintances experiencing vision loss to feel less isolated and alone.

VABVI met with the local chapter of the AARP to discuss a mutual partnership to promote each other's services. AARP connected Adult Services with the nonprofit Technology for Tomorrow; a group that provides training to seniors in Excel, Word, and other computer programs. They will be sharing with VABVI the different seminars they are running so that we can refer clients who may benefit from their offerings. They in turn will refer clients who could use our services back to us.

The Tech Fair was held in Rutland at the Elk's Lodge. Approximately 80 Vermonters with vision loss attended the event with their family and drivers. Other Vermont services such as the ABLE Library and the transportation/interpreting service for Vermonters with dual vision and hearing loss, Vancro, were in attendance. Emphasis was placed on access to commonly accessible assistive technology like the iPhone and iPad during breakout sessions. Eschenbach sent their representative Jim Leahy to attend, and he was able to share the latest in their offerings during a breakout session. Adaptive recreation and leisure were highlighted as well by our own Orientation and Mobility Specialist Jack Trainor, who covers the Southern half of Vermont.

Adult Services

An online video to promote the Second Century Campaign was launched with two videos that feature three clients demonstrating the SMART training they have received and the impact it has had on their lives. The end goal of the campaign is to develop a sustainable stream of income to expand the SMART Training to include a full-time Certified Assistive Technology Instructional Specialist for adult services. We recognize that as technology continues to advance and become more mainstream that the opportunity for seniors with vision loss to benefit from that access will only continue to increase. This additional position for our adult services program will ensure we can stay abreast of the changes and development to provide our population with the latest training as it develops.

It is important to provide a person who has been diagnosed with a serious health condition resources, so they can begin to address their wellbeing right away. VABVI developed a one page Resource Guide for doctors to provide to their patients when they are diagnosed with serious vision loss. Often our clients report they felt alone and without assistance when diagnosed. This Resource Guide aims to address that important need, and VABVI is happy to provide any medical provider with this Resource Guide to share. It contains not only information on VABVI, but the State Division for the Blind, the ABLE Library and other sister agencies that can directly help those experiencing vision loss.

The New Americans vision screening found that about half of those who participated did require follow up from an eye care provider for distance vision correction. Furthermore, many were identified as having elevated pressures which could indicate glaucoma and cataracts that required consultation from an eye care provider. Many who participated reported that they had been in the United States for several decades and never had their eye screened. VABVI hopes to continue partnering with these organizations and others to expand the screening opportunity across Vermont.

Children's Services

New referrals for Children's Services grew significantly from 39 in FY23 to 56 in FY24. VABVI currently has 14 teachers in the Children's Department who are one or more of the following: Licensed Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI), Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS) and one Certified Assistive Technology Specialist (CATIS).

The annual Intensive Residential Life Experience took place at the Jay Peak Resort in June of 2024 with 8 students in attendance, ages 9-18, and one of the students was hired as Junior Counselor. Students' favorite activities were ice skating, disc golf, beep baseball, dungeons & dragons, and swimming. Students prepared breakfast, lunches and one dinner. In addition to exploring kitchen gadgets designed for the visually impaired, they enhanced their pre-employment soft skills.



An IRLE camper goes to bat during beep baseball.



Top: Equipment for beep baseball.
Bottom: This year's IRLE campers pose for a photo on the bench.

Children's Services

Many students participated in various October White Cane Awareness events throughout the state of Vermont.

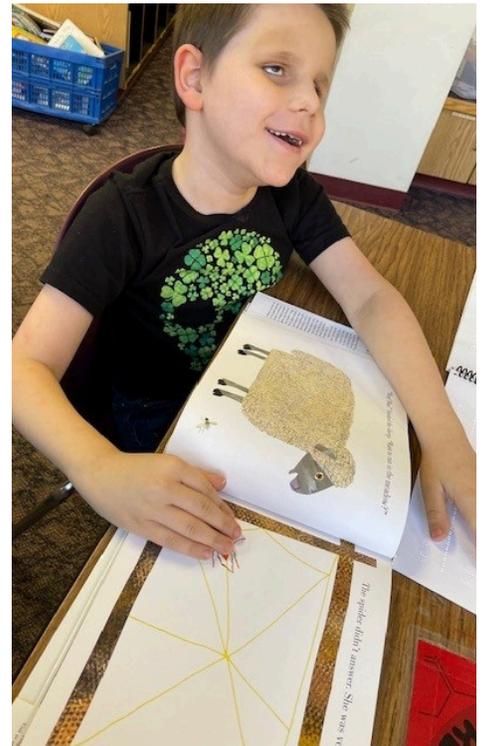
Three staff from the Children's Department—Dr. Callie Brusegaard, Shelby Glass and former employee Ally Fuddy—were the tri-chairs for the Northeast Association for the Education and Rehabilitation (NEAER) Conference in November of 2024, with most of the VABVI staff participating on the Host Committee. This 3-day conference was held at the Lodge at Spruce Peak in Stowe and brought 186 professionals (TVIs, COMS, CVRTs and CATIS) and 41 presenters from the 6 New England states and eastern Canada for 3 days of professional development.



Photo of young client courtesy of parent Casey Lee, VABVI supporter and owner of Purposeful Strength.



A group of students celebrate White Cane Day with their white canes.



A young client reads a Braille book.

Events

Solar Eclipse Celebration

April 2024 • Statewide

VABVI celebrated the solar eclipse on April 8th, 2024 in multiple locations throughout the state: Montpelier, St. Johnsbury, and Burlington. In partnership with Harvard, VABVI demonstrated the Light Sound Device, which translates light (or lack of light) to sound. This demonstration was given coverage in various local news sources and allowed us to spread the purpose of our organization!

“Travel Your Own Path” Mural Painting

June 2024 • VABVI South Burlington Office

The “Travel Your Own Path” sidewalk mural, created by VABVI O&M specialist Shelby Glass, was recreated at the VABVI South Burlington office in June. The mural remains a permanent installation, featuring the neon-colored paths of white cane users, a wheel chair user, and a guide dog. Tote bags with the design were also created and distributed towards the end of 2024.

Dancing with the Burlington Stars

September 2024 • The Flynn, Burlington

Dancing with the Burlington Stars was once again a success in 2024, taking place at the Flynn Theater in Burlington. Watch out for news about our 2025 show!

New American Vision Screenings

For some Vermonters, cultural and language barriers prevent them from knowing about or easily accessing VABVI’s services. To bridge that gap, VABVI partnered with the City of Burlington, UVMMC, Building Bright Futures, the Lions Club, and the JustServe.org charity to hold vision screenings for several New American communities in Chittenden County.

Accessibility Project

This project began in the spring of 2021, and finally in the spring of 2024, the VABVI Tactile Sign was officially installed in Burlington’s Waterfront Park!

Events



VABVI's setup at the Burlington waterfront, demonstrating the Light Sound Device during the eclipse.



The South Burlington "Travel Your Own Path" sidewalk mural, featuring neon lines on black pavement.



Dancing With the Burlington Stars participants pose in front of the show's audience at the Flynn.

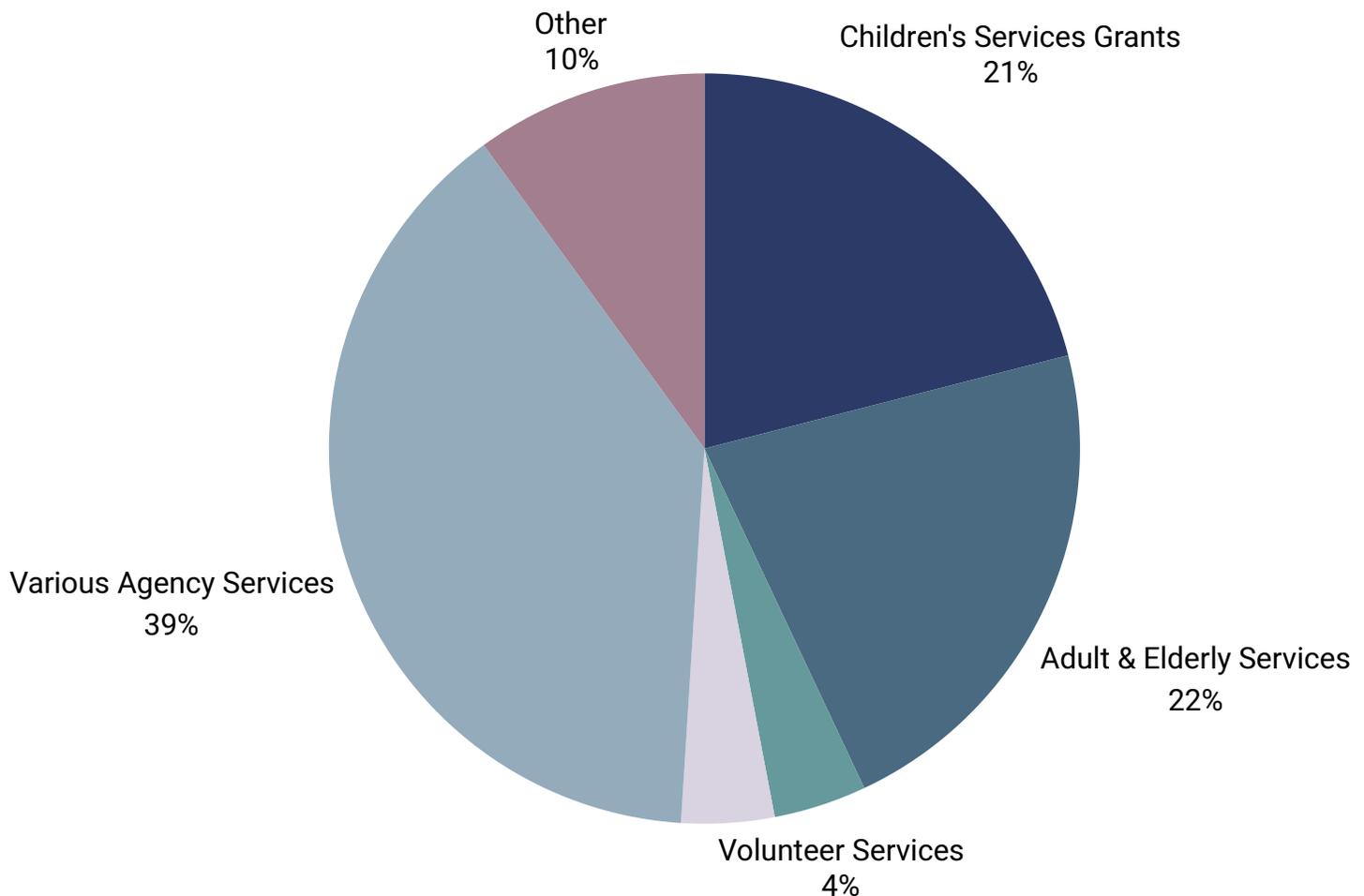


An illustration of the Accessibility Project's Waterfront sign.

Revenue

Note: Financial information shown below represents unaudited results.

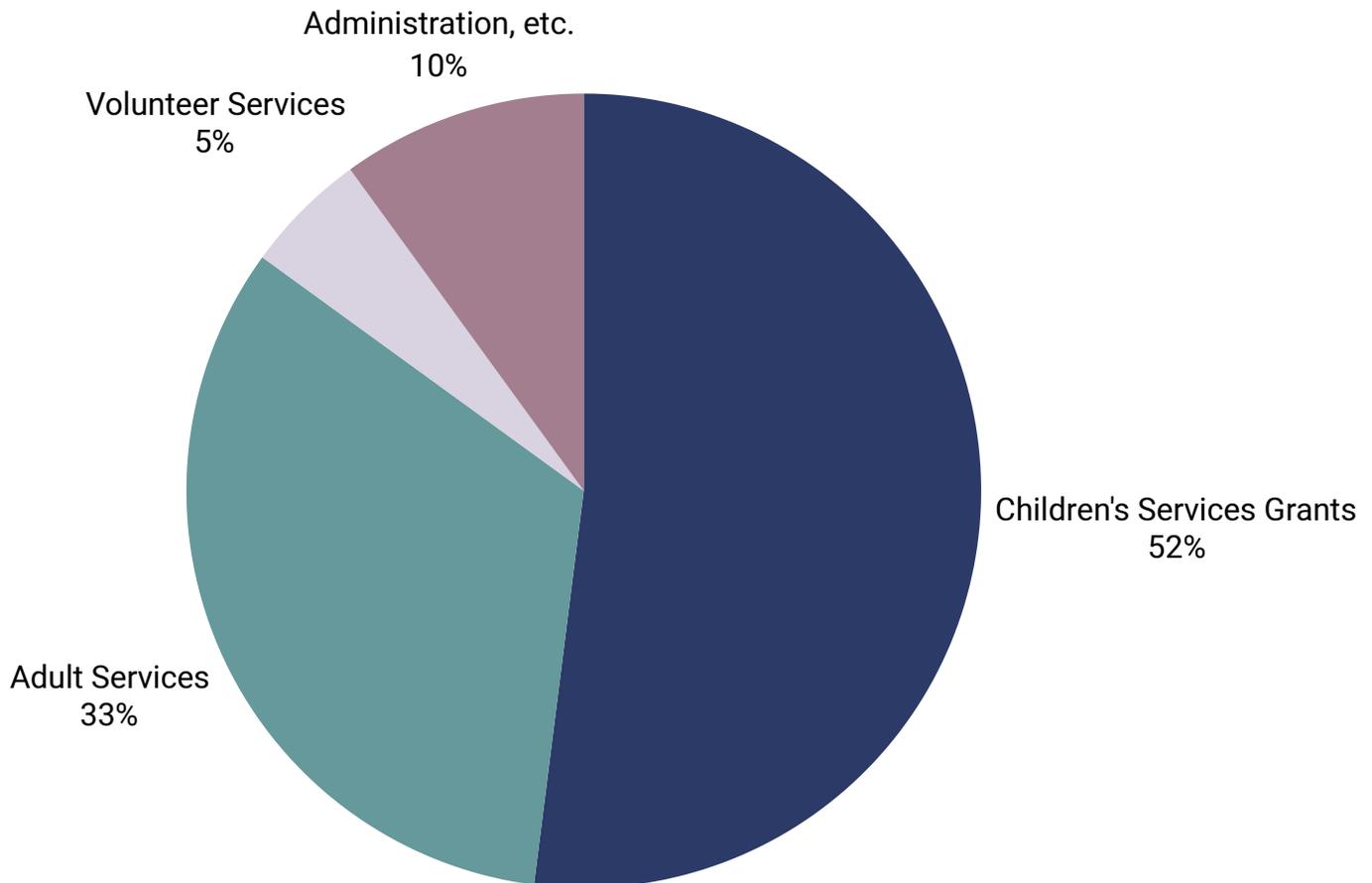
Children's Services Grants	\$708,763
Adult & Senior Services	\$725,995
Volunteer Services	\$123,571
Donations	\$126,757
Various Agency Services	\$1,315,687
Other	\$319,894
Total	\$3,320,665



Expenses

Note: Financial information shown below represents unaudited results.

Children's Services	\$1,754,044
Adult & Senior Services	\$1,110,565
Volunteer Services	\$177,369
Development, Public Ed. & Administration	\$328,890
Total	\$3,370,868



Get Connected

www.vabvi.org • general@vabvi.org

VABVI will provide services to any Vermonter. From infants to seniors, anyone directly experiencing or connected to a person experiencing vision loss can contact us for information and assistance.



South Burlington

60 Kimball Ave
South Burlington, VT 05403
(802) 863-1358

Rutland

1 Scale Ave, Ste 117 #18
Rutland, VT 05701
(802) 775-6452

Brattleboro

130 Austine Dr, Ste 280
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(802) 254-8761

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Online Giving

Online donations allow donors a hassle-free process and the knowledge that donations are put to work immediately.

It's easy to donate online.

1. Visit our simple, secure online donation form at www.vabvi.org/make-a-donation/
2. Select the "Donate Here" option.
3. Choose your amount. Every dollar helps.
4. Provide your contact information, payment method, and any optional details.

Leave Your Legacy

Many of our supporters have discovered that with a little planning, you don't need to be wealthy to make a profound difference to VABVI's mission. We're here to help you explore the various donation methods to ensure your future gift is tax effective and takes your family's needs into consideration. For more information on making VABVI a beneficiary in your will, please visit <http://vabvi.org/planned-giving/> or call John Thomas at (802) 863-1358 Ext. 224

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FY24 Statistics

VABVI provided services to **216**
children and **832** adults
in Fiscal Year 2024.

62

towns and
cities
supported
VABVI in FY24.

80

volunteers
donated
services to
VABVI
clients.

85

clients
participated
in PALS
groups across
8 counties
in Vermont.

550

tickets sold to
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